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The Census of the North American Indians.

The previous census reports on the North American Indians are principally reviews of the status of the Indians, derived from observations made by special agents, and collected from data furnished in the annual reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

The collection of satisfactory statistical data from Indian tribes is attended with peculiar difficulties, which are largely due to the multitude of Indian languages, to the necessity of employing interpreters in the collection of data, and also to the impossibility of explaining to the Indians the object of the research. For this reason it seems necessary that the data for the census should be collected largely by men who are in constant contact with the various tribes, that is to say, by the officers of the regular Indian service. Much of the material bearing upon the economic conditions of the Indians, and upon the vital statistics of the various tribes, is contained in the annual returns of the Indian agents. But their reports do not bear upon a number of questions that seem to be of considerable importance.

A census of the Indian tribes should be the means of determining the success or failure of the policy pursued during the past years, and should suggest the policy to be followed in the future. If the census is to be arranged with a view of carrying out this fundamental idea, three problems seem to be of fundamental importance: (1) the effect of the allotment of land in severalty, (2) the effect of boarding schools and of day schools, and (3) the effect of blood mixture between Indians, and whites and negroes.

Previous census reports contain a certain amount of purely ethnological information on various Indian tribes, which was collected incidentally by the agents of the Census Office. It does not seem that information of this character, highly valuable though it may be for scientific purposes, belongs properly to the domain of the census of the Indians, which ought to be confined to demographical questions. There might be an excuse for the collection of this information, if no other agencies were provided by law for collection of data of this description; but, since the Bureau of American Ethnology has been established with the express purpose of collecting data referring to the primitive condition of the Indians, the work of the census in this line is unnecessary, and duplicates the work that is done much more thoroughly and satisfactorily by the trained investigators of the Bureau of American Ethnology than it is by the occasional observations of agents whose prime interest lies in statistical inquiries.

The following questions seem of particular interest in regard to the three points which were designated before as especially desirable subjects for investigation thus:—

1. *Influence of the allotment of land in severalty to the Indians.*—Much of the information that seems desirable in connection with this subject is contained in the annual reports of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. It would seem particularly desirable to ascertain in some detail the economic condition of Indians holding land in severalty, and to classify the returns that would be obtained under the second and third heading in reference to the questions, whether Indians hold land in severalty, or as a tribal unit; and whether they receive rations, or are self-supporting.

2. *The effect of the school system upon the Indian*

population.—Indian schools may be classed as day schools, boarding schools, and training schools. The influence of the day school upon the child is comparatively slight. In the boarding school the child is removed from its home surroundings for a series of years, and in the training school this separation is emphasized by the removal to a distant locality and by the continuance of this removal for a number of years. It seems very desirable to collect detailed statistics on the fate, in later life, of the scholars in these various classes of schools, in regard as well to their state of health as to their social and economic history, particularly with a view of determining how far school life tends to break up tribal relationship, and promotes affiliation between Indians and whites.

3. *Mixture between Indians, and whites and negroes.* One of the most important problems of Indian policy is the question, in how far it is desirable to promote mixture between the Indians and other races. It is clear that, with the increase in settlement in our country, the chances for the Indian to survive as an independent race will become slighter and slighter. The opinion is frequently held that half-breeds, the descendants of Indians and whites or of Indians and negroes, are much inferior in physique, in ability, and in character, to the full-bloods. But no statistical information is available which would justify a conclusion of this character. If there was a decided deterioration of race, due to mixture, it would seem that the opportunity for race mixture should be limited so far as this can be accomplished. On the other hand, if race mixture seems to be advantageous, it should be facilitated, particularly by bringing the Indians into easy contact with the whites.

For this reason it would seem of great importance to

determine the vitality, the social environment, and criminal statistics of the half-blood as compared with the full-blood and with the white. It would seem that the most satisfactory information on this point could be gathered in the Indian schools, where half-blood children and Indian children may be observed under equally favorable conditions. The investigation should be carried on by a number of observers trained in the methods of collecting information on the bodily development of children. This investigation could be carried out, in the course of two years, on all the Indian and half-breed children attending school. It is indispensable that the inquiry should be extended over a period of two years, because each individual should be examined at least twice, at an interval of not less than one year. The results would be still more satisfactory if the investigation could be repeated at regular intervals through a period of ten years, so as to extend from the twelfth to the thirteenth census. It is of great importance to determine the fertility of full-blood and of half-blood women, an inquiry which could be carried out on the agency with the help of the agent's records, and by means of information that may be collected by the help of agency physicians. Preliminary statistics collected by the writer seem to indicate an increased fertility on the part of the half-blood woman.

The primary object of this investigation would necessitate the collection of data showing the tendency, on the part of half-breeds of both sexes, to leave the tribe to which they belong, and to merge themselves in the white population. Statistics collected in certain parts of western Canada seem to indicate that the female part of the population is more likely to leave the tribe than

is the male population, and that the male half-blood is likely to marry a full-blood Indian, while the female half-blood is likely to marry a white man.

It would be quite feasible to collect information in regard to the data mentioned here, and the results of the investigation would have an important bearing upon the shaping of our Indian policy.

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